

Article 2B.

Public Transportation.

§ 136-44.20. Department of Transportation designated agency to administer and fund public transportation programs; authority of political subdivisions.

(a) The Department of Transportation is hereby designated as the agency of the State of North Carolina responsible for administering all federal and/or State programs relating to public transportation; and the Department is hereby granted authority to do all things required under applicable federal and/or State legislation to administer properly public transportation programs within North Carolina. Such authority shall include, but shall not be limited to, the power to receive federal funds and distribute federal and State financial assistance for inter-city rail or bus passenger service crossing one or more county lines.

(b) The Department of Transportation, upon approval by the Board of Transportation, is authorized to provide the matching share of federal public transportation assistance programs through private resources, local government funds, or State appropriations provided by the General Assembly.

(b1) The Secretary may, subject to the appropriations made by the General Assembly for any fiscal year, enter into State Full Funding Grant Agreements with a Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) duly created and existing pursuant to Article 26 of Chapter 160A, a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) duly created and existing pursuant to Article 27 of Chapter 160A, or a city organized under the laws of this State as defined in G.S. 160A-1(2), to provide State matching funds for "new start" fixed guideway projects in development by any entity pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 5309. These grant agreements shall be executable only upon an Authority's or city's completion of and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approval of Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Impact Studies in anticipation of federal funding pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 5309.

Prior to executing State Full Funding Grant Agreements, the Secretary shall submit proposed grant agreements or amendments to the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee for review. The agreements, consistent with federal guidance, shall define the limits of the "new starts" projects within the State, commit maximum levels of State financial participation, and establish terms and conditions of State financial participation.

State Full Funding Grant Agreements may provide for contribution of State funds in multiyear allotments. The multiyear allotments shall be based upon the Department's estimates, made in conjunction with an Authority or city, of the grant amount required for "new start" project work to be performed in the appropriation fiscal year.

State funds may be used to fund fixed guideway projects developed without federal funding by the Department, a Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) duly created and existing pursuant to Article 26 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) duly created and existing pursuant to Article 27 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, or a unit of local government. In addition, State funds may be used to pay administrative costs incurred by the Department while participating in such fixed guideway projects.

(c) Nothing herein shall be construed to prevent a political subdivision of the State of North Carolina from applying for and receiving direct assistance from the United States government under the provisions of any applicable legislation.

(d) Repealed by Session Laws 2011-145, s. 28.12, effective July 1, 2011.

(e) The Department of Transportation is authorized to annually allocate funds to qualifying public transportation systems to be used to consolidate or coordinate with other public

transportation systems to maximize resources, gain efficiencies, and increase access to public transportation. In order to be eligible for funding under this subsection, a public transportation system must submit a plan for consolidation or coordination with another public transportation system. The plan must include a time line for completion and an estimated cost for completion. The Department is not required to provide the full amount of the estimated cost identified in the plan. The Department shall disburse the funds no later than 30 days from the date it approves the plan. The amount allocated under this subsection to a public transportation system shall not exceed two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) annually. Beginning December 1, 2017, the Department shall provide an annual report to the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee identifying for the year preceding the report (i) each public transportation system provided funding under this subsection, (ii) the amount of funds disbursed to each public transportation system, and (iii) the purpose or purposes for which each public transportation system has used the funds. (1975, c. 451; 1977, c. 341, s. 2; 1983, c. 616; 1989, c. 692, s. 2.3; c. 700, s. 1; 1993, c. 488, s. 2; 2000-67, s. 25.7; 2009-409, s. 1; 2011-145, s. 28.12; 2017-57, s. 34.18A.)

§ 136-44.21. Ridesharing arrangement defined.

Ridesharing arrangement means the transportation of persons in a motor vehicle where such transportation is incidental to another purpose of the driver and is not operated or provided for profit. The term shall include ridesharing arrangements such as carpools, vanpools and buspools. (1981, c. 606, s. 1.)

§ 136-44.22. Workers' Compensation Act does not apply to ridesharing arrangements.

Chapter 97 of the General Statutes shall not apply to a person injured while participating in a ridesharing arrangement between his or her place of residence and a place of employment or termini near such place, provided that if the employer owns, leases or contracts for the motor vehicle used in such an arrangement, Chapter 97 of the General Statutes shall apply. (1981, c. 606, s. 1.)

§ 136-44.23. Ridesharing arrangement benefits are not income.

Any benefits, other than salary or wages, received by a driver or a passenger while in a ridesharing arrangement shall not constitute income for the purposes of Article 4 of Chapter 105 of the General Statutes. (1981, c. 606, s. 1.)

§ 136-44.24. Ridesharing arrangements exempt from municipal licenses and taxes.

No county, city, town or other municipal corporation may require a business license for a ridesharing arrangement, nor may they require any additional tax, fee, or registration on a vehicle used in a ridesharing arrangement. (1981, c. 606, s. 1.)

§ 136-44.25. Wage and Hour Act inapplicable to ridesharing arrangements.

The provisions of Article 2A of Chapter 95 of the General Statutes of North Carolina shall not apply to an employee while participating in any ridesharing arrangement as defined in G.S. 136-44.21, as provided in G.S. 95-25.14(b)(6). (1981, c. 606, s. 1; c. 663, s. 14.)

§ 136-44.26. Use of public motor vehicles for ridesharing.

Motor vehicles owned or operated by any State or local agency may be used in ridesharing arrangements for public employees, provided the public employees benefiting from said ridesharing arrangements shall pay fees which shall cover all capital operating costs of the ridesharing arrangements. (1981, c. 606, s. 1.)

§ 136-44.27. North Carolina Elderly and Disabled Transportation Assistance Program.

(a) There is established the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Assistance Program that shall provide State financed elderly and disabled transportation services for counties within the State. The Department of Transportation is designated as the agency of the State responsible for administering State funds appropriated to purchase elderly and disabled transportation services for counties within the State. The Department shall develop appropriate procedures regarding the distribution and use of these funds and shall adopt rules to implement these procedures. No funds appropriated pursuant to this act may be used to cover State administration costs.

(b) For the purposes of this section, an elderly person is defined as one who has reached the age of 60 or more years, and a disabled person is defined as one who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, an individual who has a record of such impairment, or an individual who is regarded as having such an impairment. Certification of eligibility shall be the responsibility of the county.

(c) All funds distributed by the Department under this section are intended to purchase additional transportation services, not to replace funds now being used by local governments for that purpose. These funds are not to be used towards the purchase of transportation vehicles or equipment. To this end, only those counties maintaining elderly and disabled transportation services at a level consistent with those in place on January 1, 1987, shall be eligible for additional transportation assistance funds.

(d) The Public Transportation Division of the Department of Transportation shall distribute these funds to the counties according to the following formula: fifty percent (50%) divided equally among all counties; twenty-two and one-half percent (22 1/2%) based upon the number of elderly residents per county as a percentage of the State's elderly population; twenty-two and one-half percent (22 1/2%) based upon the number of disabled residents per county as a percentage of the State's disabled population; and, the remaining five percent (5%) based upon a population density factor that recognizes the higher transportation costs in sparsely populated counties.

(e) Funds distributed by the Department under this section shall be used by counties, public transportation authorities, or regional public transportation authorities in a manner consistent with transportation development plans which have been approved by the Department and the Board of County Commissioners. To receive funds apportioned for a given fiscal year, a county shall have an approved transportation development plan. Funds that are not obligated in a given fiscal year due to the lack of such a plan will be distributed to the eligible counties based upon the distribution formula prescribed by subsection (d) of this section.

(f) A regional public transportation authority created pursuant to Article 25 or Article 26 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes may, upon written agreement with the municipalities served by a public transportation authority or counties served by the regional public transportation authority, apply for and receive any funds to which the member municipality or counties are entitled to receive based on the distribution formula set out in subsection (d) of this section. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1095, ss. 1(a), 1(b); c. 1101, s. 8.2; 1989, c. 752, s. 105(b); 1993, c. 321, s. 147; 2011-207, s. 1.)

§ 136-44.28. Reserved for future codification purposes.

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